



To: Honorable Members of the Oversight Committee
House of Representatives
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Re: HB 5187 and HB 5188 - to amend the “Emergency Management Act” and “Public Health Code” to prevent future emergency orders that would “prohibit, suspend, or limit” the outdoor recreation rights of Michigan residents.

Date: October 27, 2021

Position: Support

Honorable Members of the Oversight Committee:

I write today to express the American Sportfishing Association’s support for House Bills 5187 and 5188, two crucial legislative efforts to protect access to outdoor recreation for anglers, boaters and other sportsmen.

The American Sportfishing Association (ASA) is the sportfishing industry's trade association committed to representing the interests of the recreational angling and boating industries as well as the entire sportfishing community. ASA gives these industries a unified voice when emerging laws and policies could significantly affect sportfishing business or sportfishing itself. ASA also offers America's 60 million anglers a platform in policy decisions that affect their ability to sustainably fish on our nation's waterways through Keep America Fishing, ASA’s national angler advocacy campaign.

Over the last two years, Americans have turned to the outdoors in record numbers. Faced with limitations on gathering and indoors activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans sought safe, rewarding refuge in outdoor activities such as fishing and boating. As progress against the virus continues, outdoor recreation remains as popular as ever. New anglers, hunters, boaters and sportsmen are contributing to the ongoing growth of the outdoor recreation economy, which in 2020, comprised 2.1 percent of U.S. GDP while supporting 5.2 million jobs.

In few states is the recreation economy as strong as Michigan. From waterfowl and deer hunting to fishing on any of the four Great Lakes that border the state, Michigan is a premier destination for hunting, angling, trapping and boating. In terms of fishing alone, Michigan boasts the fifth-

largest sportfishing industry of any state, with retail sales valued at \$2.5 billion, leading to a \$3.9 billion in economic output supporting nearly 30,000 jobs.

HB 5187 and HB 5188 protect Michigan's outdoor heritage, ensuring a future for the state's booming outdoors industries. In amending emergency management and public health legislation, these bills disallow the restriction of hunting and fishing in declared emergencies. Overreaching bans on fishing, as seen in Washington and Maryland during the first months of the pandemic, underscore the urgency of these bills.

Outdoors activities are a proven, safe activity to improve physical and mental health. During the "lockdown" stages of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, activities like recreational fishing afforded families and individuals a break from the indoors and stay-at-home orders, enabling them to engage safely in socially distanced activities. These bills before the Oversight Committee safeguard these pastimes for future public health crises and emergency situations, ensuring outdoor recreation can remain accessible to all.

Not only have fishing, boating, hunting and outdoor recreation been essential to Michigan's resilience in safely enduring the COVID-19 pandemic, but the industries these activities support have been at the frontlines of the state's economic recovery. As an economic and cultural pillar in the state of Michigan, outdoor recreation must be protected from unnecessary and misguided restrictions in future emergency circumstances.

For these reasons, ASA encourages the Oversight Committee to vote yes on both HB 5187 and HB 5188.

Sincerely,



Connor Bevan
Inland Fisheries Policy Manager
American Sportfishing Association